

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: JA, KN, PEPR
SUBJECT: JAPANESE DENIAL OF REPORTED MEETINGS WITH
NORTH KOREAN DIPLOMATS IN MONGOLIA

REF: STATE 101251

1. MOFA PRESS SPOKESMAN HAS FLATLY DENIED AS GROUNDLESS
AND TOTALLY WITHOUT FOUNDATION NEWSWEEK REPORT THAT
JAPANESE AND NORTH KOREAN DIPLOMATS WERE MEETING IN
MONGOLIA TO DISCUSS ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.
IN APRIL 25 MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR, BOTH PM FUKUDA AND
FONMIN SONODA MADE SPECIAL POINT OF REFUTING NEWSWEEK
STORY.

2. QUITE APART FROM THESE UNUSUALLY STRONG DENIALS,
EMBASSY HAS DETECTED NO EVIDENCE OF ANY MAJOR JAPANESE
DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVE TOWARD DPRK, AND WE HAVE NO IDEA AS
TO SOURCE OF NEWSWEEK REPORT. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, WE
WOULD NOTE THAT OVER PAST YEAR VARIOUS INDIVIDUALS BOTH
WITHIN LDP AND MOFA HAVE FLOATED IDEA THAT, THROUGH QUIET
DEVELOPMENT OF LOW-KEY DIPLOMATIC DIALOGUE WITH DPRK,
JAPAN MIGHT PLAY CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN REDUCING TENSIONS ON
KOREAN PENINSULA (AND ALSO POSITION ITSELF AGAINST REPLAY

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OF CHINA SHOCK OCCASIONED BY ANY SUDDEN UNILATERAL USG
INITIATIVE VIS-A-VIS PYONGYANG).

3. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, JAPANESE DIPLOMATS HAVE
OCCASIONALLY MET WITH NORTH KOREAN COUNTERPARTS IN PAST
FOR PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING SPECIFIC AND IMMEDIATE
PROBLEMS, SUCH AS SUDDEN ESTABLISHMENT OF NORTH KOREAN

200-MILE ECONOMIC ZONE LAST SUMMER. MOFA HAS BRIEFED
EMBASSY ON SOME OF THESE MEETINGS, SUCH AS THOSE AT UN IN
NEW YORK, BUT THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN INDICATIONS OF OTHER
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SUCH ENCOUNTERS IN THIRD COUNTRIES, WHICH JAPANESE OFFICIALS
HAVE EITHER DENIED OR ALLUDED TO ONLY IN VAGUE TERMS. IT
IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT IN FUTURE THERE WILL BE MORE SUCH
QUIET MEETINGS, PARTICULARLY IF EAST EUROPEAN EFFORTS AT
ANIMATING A US-ROK-DPRK TRIALOGUE SHOW ANY HINT OF PROGRESS.
GIVEN UNAMBIGUOUS AND HIGH LEVEL NATURE OF JAPANESE
DENIALS OF NEWSWEEK'S MONGOLIAN STORY, HOWEVER, AND LACK
OF ANY OTHER SIGNS SUGGESTING A SECRET JAPANESE POLICY
DECISION WHICH WOULD RISK ALIENATING BOTH SOUTH KOREAN
AND AMERICAN ALLIES, WE DO NOT BELIEVE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT
IS ACTIVELY PURSUING, OR EVEN SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING,
ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH DPRK AT THIS
TIME. SHERMAN

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NNN

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